

# **SOME PHASES OF UNIVERSITY EFFICIENCY**

**ALEXIS F. LANGE**

[Reprint from the UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CHRONICLE, Vol. XIII, No. 4]

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

MAR 13 1912

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PRESIDENT'S OFFICE



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## SOME PHASES OF UNIVERSITY EFFICIENCY\*

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“Lest we forget,” we do well now and then to remind ourselves—and others—that a university is not a formula of Pure Reason, nor a soulless mechanism, run perhaps for revenue only; but a social institution. As such it consists, in any given instance, of a living group of human adults and near-adults functioning together as a social organ. Its members, with their coöperative plans and practices, belong to a definite day and generation of a particular people, which through them especially expects to lead and be led, to safeguard its cultural identity, and more or less rationally to mold its own future. Only the dawn of the millennium can usher in a world university. Until then, whatever essential type-marks set off universities from other social agencies, each university is at least a national variant—if not a “sport”—and even as such need not be the twin of any other in order to function wisely and well. It follows, of course, that the directive ideas and ideals include those bearing particularly on the institutional as a phase of the national life. Ideally, an American university exemplifies American Democracy, not only in its dealings with the world’s heritage of knowledge and human aspirations and in training young men and women for making a life and a living on the highest plane, but also, and chiefly, in constituting an educational environment most clearly and fully

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\*A paper presented at a meeting of the Higher Education Section of the National Education Association, San Francisco, July 14, 1911.

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expressive of the faith in which the nation is built. Ideally, American academic citizenship conforms to the highest type of American citizenship in general. Ideally, the spirit of the university, university spirit, public spirit, patriotism, the spirit of social service, are only different aspects of the same thing.

While obvious, the implications of this organic conception will bear emphasis. One is that a university, like an individual, grows efficient as it ceases to "muddle along." It must know itself and its place in the body politic. The institutional sense due to use and wont needs to develop into the institutional consciousness that springs from insight into the laws of social progress and from the endeavor to organize and realize a correspondent system or hierarchy of aims. Another implication is, of course, increasingly aimful self-direction, which will involve more or less radical modification of the institutional adaptations of means to ends that have come down from the past. And growing thus by self-directed outgrowing implies self-management. No university can be efficient in a state of tutelage. Its conduct must be determined from within. Efficiency covers both being and doing. It is this sort of self-direction and self-management that constitutes academic freedom.

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Again, the university being a social organ, its attitude towards itself and the highest utilities of the nation cannot—from the viewpoint of efficient functioning—be that of either standpatter or revolutionist; but must be that of the practical evolutionist.

Lastly, just as according to Lowell a republic can be truly successful only if every citizen is in some measure a statesman and thinker, so a republic of letters cannot fully realize itself if university consciousness, if the self-directive force, if the evolutionary attitude, are attributes of only one man or of an oligarchy. The more efficaciously the whole system of university aims works in the mind and heart of each member of the university group, the more truly will the leaders be leaders and the sooner will the solution be

found of the problem of keeping abreast with and in advance of the society of which the university forms a part. I say "in advance of" because no progress is possible if a university tries merely to satisfy a popular demand, instead of endeavoring to discover what is needed and then to persuade the older as well as the younger generation of contemporaries to want what they need. As compared with the schools below it, a university, it should be added, is in an exceptionally fortunate position to further that teamwork which is the ideal resultant of institutional consciousness, self-direction, and self-management, because the majority of its members are of age and can understand and attain to the attitude and conduct that square with university purposes, cultural, vocational, civic.

It is from this point of view and by the criteria immanent in the university as society's organ of leadership that efficiency must be tested. Outside standards are manifestly for the most part inapplicable. The main question always is: "Is this particular university self-directing its development efficiently?" To answer it the comparative method alone will not do. Piecemeal comparisons as to government, administration, teaching, research, student life, etc., are inadequate to safe generalizations unless made in conjunction with an all-around examination of all of these factors in their connection with the institution's own historical and social setting. One reason why it is at present rather absurd either to affirm or deny that American universities are efficient, is that complete critical reviews of this sort are as yet among the things hoped for but not seen. Most of the current criticism of university conditions is partial, or partisan, or impressionistic. Its value lies in promoting institutional introspection and constructive self-criticism.

In view of this situation the safer course plainly consists in indicating by the light of the foregoing conceptions a few next steps, some nearer and remoter goals of self-directed effort toward greater efficiency. In doing so I shall often

refer to the university I know best, without losing sight, I hope, of the representative value of such references.

The first need, country-wide, is obviously to endeavor with might and main to clear up the present confusion of ideas concerning university and college aims. As long as this confusion lasts the university house will be divided against itself. Owing to a course of development too familiar to be rehearsed here, American universities, the state universities without exception, have become university-colleges. And the union of the two types of institution is thus far rather mechanical than organic. Moreover, the tendency is to subordinate the cultural or man-centered aim of the traditional college of liberal arts to the work-centered or professional aims of a German university. My conviction is that an organic union of purposes and types of organization can be effected and is being effected,—not, however, by relegating all professional training to the graduate school, nor by maintaining any other rigid line of demarcation. Practical, and theoretical considerations no less, favor a pretty thoroughgoing dovetailing. The vocational training which is only that can never be as fully efficient as one which allows ample opportunity for personal culture. It is not only too early specialization that defeats itself, but all specialization that absorbs the whole man. Wherever professional training begins—and this includes training for research—breadth of outlook, richness of ideas and sympathies, and an all-around appreciation of the forces of civilization, including the specialty, must not be sacrificed, if the nation is to have leaders. Hence the desirability of what may for short be called college courses, even in the curricula of all professional schools. On the other hand, college aims are onesidedly carried out unless the student realizes through actual training in the foundation disciplines of a profession what modern scholarship means to modern civilization. At the University of California such considerations as these have led to a reorganization in which the man-centered college aims are meant to



be uppermost during the first two years. These two years are supposed to be sacred to the student's further enlargement of his outlook and to his endeavor to find himself. From there forward the *emphasis* is supposed to shift to progressively work-centered or professional pursuits. Beyond the bachelor's degree come the courses devoted largely to the mastery of professional applications and technique.

Practice does not, of course, always follow closely on the heels of policy. But when these organic adjustments are complete, the lines of articulation will be diagonal rather than horizontal. Professional training will appear not mechanically superimposed on either the middle line of the old-time college nor on that fixed by the bachelor's degree, but organically adjusted, as a new branch is grafted slantwise into the stem of a plant. The traditional bachelor's degree becomes thus not less but more significant as representative of modern liberal culture, as representative of the union of efficiency of being and efficiency of doing.

But a university will not improve its efficiency by reshaping and correlating anew merely its own structural parts in accordance with the organized purposes of a university-college. It functions at its best only if vitally adjusted to and correlated with the high school, indeed every other part of the state's educational system. Guided by this principle and its corollaries, the University of California has reshaped its entrance requirements with reference to the beginning of the junior year rather than the freshman year. While thus the University in the narrower sense rises from and out of the middle of the traditional four-year course and extends upward by organic transitions to the various professional termini, secondary education by equally organic transitions extends, at least is meant to extend, without a shifting of aims or emphasis or radical change of methods, to the same median points marked by what is known as the Junior Certificate. As a part of the same policy, the University has strenuously

supported a professional standard of preparation for high school teaching, which in California calls at present for at least a year of graduate training. Furthermore, the University and the normal schools of the state have arrived at various methods of coöperation which are furthering, in increasingly effective ways, the solidarity and efficiency of the whole teaching body.

As an integral part of the same policy, the University has for more than a decade urged the upward extension of the four-year high schools, not only as a means of checking the hypertrophy of its lower classes but also as a method of extending the reach of secondary training. Many more than at present would be enabled to continue the formal educational process to the very close of adolescence. Fewer by far would have to be satisfied with a secondary course which not only begins too late but stops too early as well. More important still in its bearings upon efficiency is the fact that by making the additional two years not only a cultural connecting link with the upper division of the University but also and especially a final vocational opportunity, a bridge from school to life would be constructed for thousands that now either receive no vocational training or else are misdirected by way of the university into professions in which they will always be misfits. Not less than twenty-five per cent, I believe, of university students consist of those who should, and probably would, never have entered if a vocational school had been open to them, more advanced than that based on the grammar grades or perhaps on two years of high school preparation. We should thus assist, on the one hand, in making the school-system a better selective agency for efficient social service, and should, on the other hand, relieve the university of students intended for lifework just as noble but different from that for which a university prepares. Such reorganization, I would add with emphasis, does not involve the extinction now or in the future of the lower division of the university-college. It would mean simply smaller and pre-



sumably better-selected freshmen and sophomore classes. It does involve, of course, standards of scholarship for such high school teaching equivalent to those maintained for college work.

These adjustments of aims, leading to a more perfect union of now frequently conflicting college and university purposes, and the structural adaptations necessitated thereby, raise the question of efficient instruction and scholarship. It seems clear that the present method of training and selecting the university staff must be modified. In my judgment no single factor would make more for efficiency than a functional differentiation of professors into college and university professors without discrimination against either class as to honor, emolument, or position. No minute analysis of the present situation is required to reveal how the current onesided emphasis on research and the training for research impairs the efficiency of the university. The newly made doctor of philosophy is usually the last person to be entrusted with the carrying out of college aims. In this respect our imitation of Germany has not gone far enough. In Germany the man-centered purposes of education remain from first to last in the hands of men of approved fitness. In the gymnasium it is the most experienced and the most successful teachers that have charge of the work corresponding to that of the freshman and sophomore years, while in the German university it is not usually the young *privat dozent* but the broadest and ripest master of his field who gives the lectures designed to orient the student on the basis of a coherent *Weltanschauung*. With us the same task devolves on young men presumably well qualified to lead broadly trained mature students up to and across the frontier of knowledge in fields in which these students are presumably seeking their self-realization as expert members of society. In other words, they are prepared to give vocational rather than college training. Their college work naturally often appears to them in the light of a dull and dreary but inevitable prelim-

inary to a professorship. A very common result is that they become neither good teachers nor productive scholars. Clearly, if they are to become the latter, the way must be opened for them during the earlier years of their service. And this is not done by making productive scholarship incidental. On the other hand, freshman and sophomores do not get the guidance and the discipline to which they are entitled. They should have something more adequate to liberal culture aims. Nor can one escape the conviction that some method must be found whereby all candidates for a university career may be made thoroughly familiar with the history, problems, principles, methods, and present status of both secondary and university education. Their efficiency depends on whether or not they find themselves as college or university teachers and as university citizens with an intelligent grasp of the university organism as a whole and its relation to the larger social whole. From this point of view it must be admitted that our universities are not completely institutions in any organic sense. Often the tendency of evolution seems to be rather toward mechanical aggregates of mutually repellent particles.

It is often asserted, and as often indignantly denied, that university instruction is of poorer quality than that found in any other part of the school system. Both parties to the controversy, it happens, are right and both are wrong. If college teaching alone is considered, the charge cannot easily be refuted. If, on the other hand, the professional teaching of the university, the training for research included, is under examination, our universities will bear comparison even with the methods and results of German universities and with good teaching anywhere.

Closely connected with this matter of getting the best men for what each can do best is the problem of adequate working conditions. The central functions of the university demand the utmost economy of the time and energy of the teaching staff. Here more than one of the suggestions prescribed by business doctors may well be adopted. An

increase, for example, in the staff of experts in routine administration. The staunchest upholder of faculty autonomy cannot reasonably object to methods meant to conserve the university teacher's energies in order that these may be concentrated on teaching and research. It is however equally desirable to realize that the legislative and judicial functions of a university by which the educational policy is determined and its execution assured and tested will not be exercised in a vital way unless each faculty member is given or finds his opportunity for service as an academic citizen. Without this he is not likely to be a good citizen. Only by active participation in directing the evolution of the university can there be created what may be called intelligent university opinion. Only in this way can there come that institutional consciousness, that self-direction and self-management, which will keep the university an efficient social organ. The more closely this ideal is approached the less occasion will there be to fear university despotism or, what is worse, faculty oligarchies, and the more easily will that sort of social coöperation be reached which is perhaps best symbolized by the teamwork of a football team. The team is a unit. Each member of it understands the game as a whole. Each functions in his position—his specialty—as a part of the whole. Each contributes intelligently and loyally to the success of the whole. All follow the captain and submit to his decision because they want to win the game. This is said with all due regard to the distance between a university sheepskin and a university pigskin.

But if the university is to become an organic whole, clear-eyed as to its aims and sure-footed as to their execution, the student-body must participate as fully as possible in the self-direction of institutional policies and life. The so-called student activities constitute a large part of the educational curriculum. They cannot and should not be eliminated. They should and can be brought into harmony with the central purposes of the university. What lends

emphasis to this view is the newness of the university-college and its confusing transitional status. The students who underwent a college course fifty years ago could not escape the acquiring of the institutional sense. At present no two graduates need carry away coincident notions of their *alma mater*. Obviously such alumni are not in a position to assist intelligently in the preservation and further development of an institution that they know at best only in one of its multitudinous aspects. Sentimental loyalty, however intense and voluble, must always be inferior by many degrees to a rationalized loyalty rooted in a comprehensive view of the university as one coöperative body of professors and students. The university needs to interpret itself to the student, deliberately and planfully. Among the courses offered should always be one which would introduce the student to his *alma mater*, which would trace the development of his university, make clear its complex nature, explain what the president and the faculty are trying to do, reveal the relations of college to university aims and methods, and the functions of the whole institution as an organ of the commonwealth, and would bring home to the student his social responsibility. If this were done in the same spirit of sympathetic inquiry and criticism as that which is supposed to be characteristic of university teaching, such a course would tend to produce more helpful because more intelligent alumni. It would assist the student in finding himself. It would make for better citizenship within and outside the university.

In corroboration I might cite the form of student self-government developed during the past decade at the University of California. Although perhaps not very consciously due to such university policies and institutional embodiments as I have discussed, their shaping influences are nevertheless unmistakable. The obvious success of what has come to be known as senior control is explicable only by a growing university consciousness. Its sanction is not derived from a written constitution but from a public



opinion in accord with an intelligent conception of university development. Among the gratifying results two deserve special mention. One is that it has not been found necessary for the faculty and the president to deal in any but a formal way with cases of discipline, during the past three years. The other is that the student-body is itself endeavoring to subordinate "student activities" to the central purposes of the University and to avail itself of these things not as by-products or sideshows—which indeed they are not in the larger view—but as legitimate, wholesomely socializing agencies.

The universities must plan for the future. Only by doing so can they justify their claim to efficient leadership. To do so effectively they must provide for social needs as soon as they can be provided for by organized courses of training. I would lay it down as a principle of efficiency that collectively and through a sensible division of labor the universities must care for and should pioneer for all vocations that are arising or may be raised to the rank of a profession. The carrying out of this principle would seem to call at the present day, for example, for new departments or subdepartments of public health, of public and business administration, of domestic science in as far as this stands for or can be made to stand for professions for women, and of education, as far as the teaching of applied science is concerned, in order that in this field too there may be leaders just as broad and scholarly and as expert as those in the older fields—ought to be. But what we need for such purposes is not a further vocationalization of undergraduate courses, but professional projections beyond the bachelor's degree. For it must be insisted that university efficiency depends, in a large measure, on the number of young men and women who can and are willing to give sufficient time to the general as well as the professional preparation. Propaedeutic courses, however, I repeat, may well come in, in fact must come in, before the traditional graduation, as an essential aid to that potential efficiency



which can legitimately be demanded of the holder of the bachelor's degree. The university, no more than the secondary school, can increase its efficiency by becoming a trade school or by arresting the development of wholeness of manhood and womanhood.

This skeleton review has made it plain, I hope, that my conclusions are of an optimistic nature. All things considered, our American universities are more efficient than any other social institutions of the land. Their pains are for the most part growing-pains. They are steadily approaching that state which I have described as conscious, self-directed, self-managed; they are year by year worthier organs of leadership for the nation.





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